3 SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR

539

"Lust is deceitful: I have lost my blanket through it."

(Proverb)

121 *Fertility and Morality*

3.1. It may justly be asked why a lengthy treatment of sexual behaviour is considered necessary to an account of Badaga medical conditions. Sex is a normal bodily function, and any diseases associated with this function are dealt with elsewhere in this book (6.61-6.62). Yet there are three reasons why the following emic account of sexual behaviour has been put together. One is that a similarly full account of peasant sexual activity seems to be lacking in the literature currently available on South Asia, and so I am able to fill a certain gap with this difficult and necessarily impressionistic essay. Secondly, the genetic effects of sexual practices are quite different from what Badaga marriage rules would suggest. Those rules represent the Badagas as an endogamous community, made up of a number of almost wholly endogamous phratries, and practising preferential cross-cousin marriage. This picture differs from what we may call the breeding pattern, which clearly allows for genetic intermingling between all of the Badaga phratries, and furthermore for Badaga males to contribute to the gene pool of Kotas, Todas and other neighbouring communities. Thirdly, these breeding patterns are obviously tied to the spread of certain venereal diseases. This is of great importance, since there appears to be a positive relationship between degree of religious orthodoxy, hierarchical status of a phratry, and fertility. To be more precise, the Wodeyas, the phratry highest in status, are orthodox, vegetarian, and Lingayat. My impression was that extra-marital sexual licence was less with this phratry than with certain lower-ranking ones, and much less than with the lowest group, the Toreyas. At the same time my censuses of several Badaga villages showed the following average numbers

121 615 554 840 (839) 615 163

4: Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

615 163 of live children for samples of selected phratries in 1963 and 1972:

Table 3. Average Number of Living Children per Married Woman in Four Selected Badaga Villages (Listed Hierarchically)

	1963	1972
one Wodeya village (highest group)	3.63 (*N*=35)	3.55 (*N*=49)
one Adikiri Lingayat village	3.49 (*N*=43)	3.72 (*N*=58)
one Gauda village	3.14 (*N*=84)	3.60 (*N*=88)
one Toreya village (lowest group)	3.12 (*N*=17)	3.05 (*N*=20)

In Table 3, *N* stands for the number of married women in each selected village for whom the number of living children was ascertainable. In practice this included virtually all wives, including barren wives and second or third wives, but excluded a very few aged widows, in each village population.

(842) The selective factors underlying these statistical differences certainly include differential exposure to venereal diseases and consequent low fertility of some women, either through tubal occlusion or through the miscarriages and congenital abnormalities that syphilis causes. The names of the phratries are listed in hierarchical order, 615 554 163 Wodeyas being the most superior ritually and Toreyas the most inferior. Very impressionistically, and only for purposes of the present analysis, we might label the Wodeyas and Adikiris "upper class," the Gaudas "middle class," and the Toreyas "lower class." With such a categorization we might then expect that the upper class has a higher average of live children because it can afford better maternity and medical care, better food, and the more reliable scientific medical practitioners. Yet nothing could be further from the present case. It is the middle class who get all of these things most 615 554 readily. The upper class phratry of Wodeyas is in fact a poor, and medically conservative, educationally backward group who are upper *only* in the sense of their vegetarianism, exclusivity, and religious orthodoxy (cf. 10.12). Many of their males perform priestly services for the other Badaga phratries as well as farming; many of their villages lie quite close to towns. The middle-class group are (548) farmers, but not priests, and they have the highest rate of contact

41 Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

with non-Badaga prostitutes. The lower-class group, as we shall see below (3.7—*c*), has some extra-marital sexual contact with a wide range of other Badaga men, including of course some who have also had relations with diseased prostitutes. Since the four chosen villages are representative in their subcultures of these four phratries, are all accessible to therapists and midwives, are located within three miles of each other in the middle of the plateau, are all at the same elevation of about 6,500 feet, but in no instances were using contraceptives in 1963, it is difficult to avoid explaining the divergence between the average number of children in these families by any other means than this hypothesis: that *there is a positive correlation between socio-ritual status* (*or extent of religious orthodoxy*) *and the fertility of women.* I realize this may sound like moralizing; but it is the census data and not I myself that shows the "good," orthodox Badaga parents to have more live births than those who indulge more in inter-community, extra-marital relations.

The number of stillbirths and abortions is something I know nothing about. In one well-to-do Adikiri farming family which happened to include two skilled midwife-therapists, a woman married at the age of 12 conceived first at 18, and then had a total of five live births and another five miscarriages or neonate deaths. I have no reason to believe either that her husband (whom I know well) was diseased or that her birth history is really atypical.

Sex Education

3.2. A useful way of approaching the matter of Badaga sexual practice is to ask how the individual acquires his knowledge of the matter. The answer is that diverse sources are available, including conversation with others, observation of men and animals, and experimentation. We shall elaborate on each of these in turn.

Conversation on sexual matters occurs not only with members of one's own sex but also with lovers. Since in each case the party with whom one holds such conversation may be either an age-mate or some older person, there is a relatively free flow of information from one generation to another, and between the two sexes. Nonetheless some propriety is observed in seeking the information. Parents do not usually give any sex instruction to their children, nor do elder brothers generally give it to younger siblings or elder sisters to their younger sisters. The mother's brother, who is a kind of

4: Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

about to receive food, she brought a pot outside, left it on the ground, and stepped back about five meters while the visitor poured her foodstuffs into the pot. This was in fact the usual way of giving food to untouchables in South India. As women did not expect very good food in the menstrual hut they tended to fill themselves up before leaving home: "The eye of the ox which has been ploughing is on the village; the eye of a woman just before menses is on the hearth." A more rambunctious proverb states: "The woman who has not eaten is like the one in the menstrual hut; the woman who does not fart is like summer"—summer being a rather uncomfortable period.

Adult Sexual Activity

3.15. Badaga society seems to be more tolerant of sexual escapades, whether within or beyond the bonds of marriage, than is usually recorded as the case in other Hindu communities. Thus a frustrated missionary reported: "Badaga women, who have not come much into contact with Christianity, freely express their disgust at the miserable condition of Christian women, who are bound to one husband only!" (Anonymous 1894: 547). A proverb still heard on the lips of Badaga men expresses their exasperation with womenfolk: "A passionate wife is as bad as a house that leaks" (Metz 1864: 94). Yet there is little of the double standard of morality that separates the sexes in orthodox Hindu and Muslim India. Badagas of both sexes enjoy coitus, a factor that is essential to procreation, for they believe that unless a couple are properly satisfied by the act the woman will not conceive. Ignorance of the physiological facts of paternity is evidenced from the belief expressed by older informants that, if either husband or wife is contemplating divorce and remarriage, then pregnancy cannot occur even though they still have intercourse. Nevertheless they do believe that a foetus grows out of the semen in the womb, and it is fed by blood coming from the mother's belly (10.13). In those situations where a couple are satisfied but no pregnancy ensues, it is assumed that some sin has been committed by either the couple or their ancestors.

Despite this emphasis on the pleasurable aspect of sex, much coitus is reported to occur for other reasons. When a couple have been working hard all day in the woods or fields they really feel the need for total rest throughout the night. Yet they may still have inter-

4: Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

833 course simply to please their parents; or so that the husband will not be suspected of impotence by his watchful relatives; or so that his parents may not accuse the girl of being barren; or, when one of them does want intercourse, the other does it merely to oblige. Pub-
[208] lic opinion is an important factor in sexual relations, and it must if possible be satisfied by a pregnancy. If a couple have no children
•842 a divorce may be forced upon them after a while, even if neither
586 of them wants that. When a couple have no children outsiders start
208 asking their parents, "What is the matter with them?" Interestingly, loose talk of this sort will be directed towards the childless husband before people — primarily his parents — begin to attach any blame to the girl.

833 Older couples who have several children continue to engage in
887 coitus either for pleasure or out of habit, I was told. Men may con-
886 tinue into old age, perhaps performing the act no more than once a month; but women tend to lose interest once menopause has set in, and are often not in the best of health by that time. A small mino-
589 rity of widowers decide they have the strength to remarry and provided they are wealthy enough to support another wife may intimate this interest to a male friend of equal age. He will tell the old man's sons and daughters about the idea, and these children will then look around for a new stepmother. This however will only occur after they have tested the old man's capabilities. One test is to have some-
[514] one observe him when he urinates: it must be noted whether the flow
[827] of urine was strong enough to make a slight hole in the mud, which would be taken as an indication of suitable strength. A further test
589 might involve the wife of his younger brother. She would be deputed
835 to catch him somewhere privately where she might suggest particular women for him, or even go so far as to assay his capabilities herself. Such an affair would be impermissible if the old man were related as a "husband's father" to her — albeit a classificatory one. But otherwise, provided the affair were handled with discretion, it would be quite acceptable for her to have relations with a husband's brother. Furthermore "it is quite common for a widow to marry her
587 brother-in-law" ("Miles" 1933: 74). In the past a wealthy old widower
833 might ask a younger man to find him a wife. If successful in this he would probably locate a young but barren woman, who might well complain right away that such an old man could not satisfy her. This dilemma was sometimes overcome when the go-between undertook to satisfy the woman provided she married his older friend.

41 Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

ing and start the housework, she would pollute the food were she not to wash first. She must bathe after having had intercourse, and older women in the household watch to see that she does so. It would be a major sin for a woman to attend to her children in the morning without bathing first, and if her child dies in infancy her husband's mother may blame her for having killed it by this terrible omission.

Young couples generally have coitus with the man lying on top of the girl, his legs outside hers. If this does not satisfy her she wraps her legs around his buttocks. Otherwise she will certainly be more satisfied if she sits astride her husband while he sits on the edge of the bed. If necessary she will fondle him to arouse his enthusiasm. It is said that one needs a large penis to satisfy a woman properly. Without both testicles the penis will not stiffen effectively: this is indeed their only function. These intimate details can become a subject of ribaldry when a girl is noticed to be visiting her parents too often: people may chide the husband for having a small organ, or suggest he try the second and third positions just described, or else nickname him *O:gotte* ("one-ball").

The amount of sexual activity depends on the husband's stamina and interest, and becomes progressively less as he gets older. Until their first child is born a couple may do it several times nightly, two or three times a week. After a birth has occurred they probably do it less often, and should not recommence coitus until the fifth month after the birth. Young married men boast to their friends about the number of times they have done it in one night; but such statements are necessarily prone to exaggeration. The terminology used in such bawdy discussions may range from *ke:vatu* (a noun — "fuck") to the somewhat more seemly *ma:duvatu* (similarly translatable, but literally meaning "doing"). *Katira* ("it makes, does") is generally used of animals, but may occur in reference to a lusty man in the phrase *e:ru katira*, "to fuck like a buffalo." (This is considered something of a compliment.) The usual pattern of intercourse seems to recognize a "safe period." Couples have coitus once or twice in the period between the sixth and the fourteenth or fifteenth days after menstruation, which they rightly consider to be the period when conception may occur. Those however who want no more children have intercourse only from the twenty-fifth or twenty-sixth day after the previous menstruation.

4: Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

Fertility and Infertility

3.17. A basic problem of public health administration—to control the abundant fertility of Indian and other Asian populations—has never been taken for a problem by the Badaga community. Even though their population has increased from 2,207 in 1812 to 104,392 in 1971 their village leaders are only now beginning to perceive that such a staggering increase (4,730 per cent in 160 years) has to be curtailed. Sons were of course valued in a farming community in a frontier-like situation, and long after swidden agriculture had ceased and the amount of farmland stabilized people still thought in terms of having a number of sons for security. This entailed on the average having the same number of daughters. ("Even though you repeatedly tell her, she is only delivering girls," a proverb bemoans.) And as standards of public hygiene slowly increased so too did the excess of births over deaths. In various prayers Badagas still ask: "May the house be filled with children!" In contrast, however, one proverb acknowledges that, "The mother who has given birth to ten children [is almost like someone] dead from having fallen in the lake." Another traditional proverb counsels: "Rather than deliver ten pigs [i.e., unscrupulous children], deliver one [good child] Nandi." In the 600 households of my sample the average nuclear family had 3.7 children.

For Badagas then, the more important problem is infertility. Several lady therapists have built their reputations on their abilities to cure or at least to predict a woman's barrenness. In some marriages, as we have seen, the apparent infertility is an effect, in the Badaga's view, of the couple thinking about divorce and hence not satisfying each other through intercourse. "Treatment" for infertility will be discussed in more detail below (6.62).

The commonest solution for an infertile marriage is for the woman to bring her younger sister into the home as a second wife. Should the latter prove infertile too their natal family is considered accursed: the thought that the problem might lie with the husband does not arise. If the barren wife does not supply a substitute she is usually sent home to her parents. Her fate then, if she is lucky, will be to marry a widower who needs a woman's labour in the house but who already has his children (Jagor 1876: 200). Nowadays childless couples tend to follow the South Indian practice of visiting distant temples on pilgrimage, and promising to give the gods something when they have been blessed with a son.

41 Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

000 when they have been blessed with a son.

•842 3.18. We have pointed out above (3.16) that Badagas have some idea of a "safe period" at the end of the menstrual cycle, and they also believe the middle of the cycle is when conception occurs. Beyond this, however, there was no idea of contraception until public health officials recently began the family planning campaign. This advice, given out by government officials, for years fell on deaf ears because it was addressed to the men of the community. When I asked 420 Badaga adults of both sexes, in 1963, whether some form of birth control should be encouraged to improve village life, not a single person said Yes. In the late 1960s however the programme began to be more effective because illiterate old Badaga women pointed out to younger women the benefits of having fewer children. Intra-uterine devices seem to be the method most women favour; but some men have submitted to vasectomies, and women have sometimes been sterilized after a difficult delivery in hospital. I am unaware of any distribution of government-supplied contraceptives to Badaga men except during a very brief campaign nearly 20 years ago. Men are however encouraged to have vasectomies with the offer of free transportation to the hospital, 60 rupees, and a transistor radio. K. Sithamma said she disapproved of this programme because if a man's children should die once he has been sterilized he cannot have any more. In her view the only proper way to restrict births is to stop having coitus until another child is wanted; abstinence was seemingly often counselled to the poor. Whether a woman gets pregnant or remains barren is the will of God, and because a pregnancy is his gift abortion would be a sin. "You should build the house; God should give you children." Nonetheless one does hear of unmarried girls aborting by eating a lot of greasy chicken until they vomit, the stomach spasms sometimes having the desired effect. (Among the neighbouring Irula tribe a two-inch twig of swallow wort is reportedly placed in the vagina to bring about an abortion; Nambiar and Bharati 1965: 70).

842 168

842

(771) (847) (771)

4: Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

826 829 842 It is important that a child should look like a mixture of both parents, even though it is believed to develop solely from the man's semen when in the mother's womb. If it resembles only one of them, that parent will die within a year of the child's birth. The skin should preferably be light in complexion, and relatives will then be very proud of it. If a child is born with grey hair or light-coloured eyes, however, it is felt the family will not like it.

844 787 Badagas also believe that if a woman's first birth is a daughter, she will have further births. If the seventh birth is a daughter and the eighth a son, then the family will prosper. People also say that if while crawling the infant is seen to peer at its genitals, the next child born to the mother will be of the opposite sex.

4: Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

757

thing. The leathery skins of mangosteen fruit are also reported to cure dysentery when soaked in hot water which is drunk by the patient (Krishnamurthi 1953 : 145).

[164]

WORMS

6.59. In adults the same symptoms may indicate difficulties with worms or with a displaced colon. In order to distinguish between the two problems, a therapist rubs some oil onto the belly, and as he does so there is a sound of liquid moving inside. If that noise continues after the rubbing, it means that worms are growing inside the belly. A treatment for a displaced colon is to tie a very cold, wet cloth on the belly in the morning. If the diarrhoea problem subsides for some time, this means it is not worms that are responsible.

Adults also suffer from worms because of eating too much sweet food. The same medicine is made for them as for children (5.36), but they are given two or three teaspoonfuls of it every morning and evening, not thrice daily, until they recover.

[164]

ULCER (*hotte huṇṇu*)

6.60. It is said that ulcers can be cured by swallowing the ground leaves of the dead nettle mixed with lime juice (Krishnamurthi 1953 : 145).

Genitals

304
168
842

6.61. Neither the Badagas nor any of the neighbouring tribes practise circumcision or clitoridectomy. Some men have recently had vasectomies at the Government Hospital, in connection with the family planning programme.

164

VENEREAL DISEASE

Other South Indians sometimes claim there are eighteen different kinds of genital disease, but the Badagas know of only two kinds: *su:le*, which originates in women, and *belle*, which originates in men. Women cannot be troubled by *su:le*, but men suffer when they catch it from women; similarly, men are not afflicted by *belle*, but women can catch it from men. I was told that a century ago nearly all of the Badaga, Toda, Kota, Kurumba

and Irula women had *belle*, whereas today only a tiny minority of them do.

People with either of these diseases are generally weak and unhealthy. *Su:le* can be recognized by the watery sores, but *belle* cannot be seen because it is "inside the body" of men. A therapist can tell from a person's face whether he has either disease. The remedy is to eat opium, as often as three times daily. In earlier days Badaga youths were encouraged to have relations with a variety of women so that they would catch *su:le* early in life; for if it first attacked them when much older and weaker it could kill them. Since they deliberately tried to spread the disease in this manner, it tended to be more widespread among the Badagas than among other tribal groups.

Nowadays it is a great disgrace if a person is known to have a venereal disease and he is shunned socially. The seriousness with which it is treated is adumbrated in the proverb, "A debt is like a woman's disease (*su:le*)." In general the disease is still brought into the community by men who have had relations with non-Badaga women, such as urban prostitutes. If a man knows that he is infected he avoids infecting his wife.

It is said that a particularly virulent form of the disease can only be cured by intercourse with a donkey. If the donkey dies immediately afterwards, the man is presumed cured. In one village where I stayed a man borrowed the washerman's donkey, but was dismayed to find that it did not die.

STERILITY

6.62. Aside from venereal disease, the only other serious reproductive problem for Badaga is infertility, as we have seen (3.17). To understand this, it must be stated that they do not traditionally connect conception with the fertilization of an ovum, but see it as an effect of satisfaction in the minds of the couple. Badagas do believe men can be sterile, but so rarely that only one man would

41 Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

842 be that way for every thousand women who are. It is not assumed that a women is barren if her first marriage produces no children, however: the couple should divorce and both remarry, in order to have children with other spouses. By this procedure it will be seen whether a person is really infertile. Badagas believe infertility is caused by a curse, or by sin done in one's previous life, or by the sins of one's ancestors. In some villages a childless man would allow his brother to have coitus with his wife in an attempt to gain offspring.

754 783 837 835

I was unable to identify any definite medicine for infertility. A barren girl was inspected nude by a therapist and told that "she was intended to be a male and would never have childern." (Sometimes the therapist could tell from a girl's face if she were incurable, and told her so.) Nonetheless the female therapist later on (around 1930) made a positive suggestion for curing the barren girl: she should get hold of a small boy just after he had defecated, and while his penis was in a somewhat erect state; she should then gently suck on his organ. This was probably a reflection of the idea offered somewhere in the Puranas that the semen of small boys is in vaporous form; later it becomes liquid; and in old age it has become solid. It is highly doubtful, however, whether any Badagas believe a woman can be inseminated through the mouth.

842 759

842 759 755 839

827

This particular therapist did have a medicine for infertility, but apparently died with her secret long before I worked in her villages. She did know of a plant that cured the affliction, and once mentioned to a daughter-in-law that the cure was very difficult and that she had very high standards for its proper performance. In administering the medicine she also told women they should love their husbands to the utmost, for they were usually barren simply because their minds were not

842 759

4: Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

fully with the partner. Some non-vegetarians do make a medicine for infertility from the eye of the crow-pheasant (*Centropus sinensis parroti*).

6.63. Badagas rarely offer *pu:ja* at a local temple nowadays in order to obtain children, but in the last century they often did so. Worship of the phallic *linga* symbol associated with Siva was considered very efficacious, particularly in those rare cases where it happened to be a prehistoric axe-head that had "miraculously appeared" in a field during ploughing. The Badaga ancestress deity Hette was also commonly resorted to for the same reason (Jagor 1876 : 199-200). Today it is usual for a couple with no children to make a pilgrimage to some important temple in the South Indian plains, where they make oaths to various gods, promising them goats, coconuts or idol ornaments once they have satisfied the supplicants' need for a child. It is no light matter for a man in an undivided joint family to take such an oath, because of the rules that it entails: in order to fulfil his promise after the birth of a child, the man must consult his family as to when that can be done. The problem is that (*a*) these oaths are normally fulfilled after a birth, but only on a festival day if they were taken in a *Badaga* temple: (*b*) they must not be fulfilled while *any* woman in the joint family is pregnant ; and yet (*c*) they must be fulfiled within twelve years of the requested birth. If this last rule is disregarded the offended god may visit another misfortune on the family; and so, even in a nuclear family, a man will try to discharge his obligation to the deity well before the twelve years following the birth, just in case his wife should happen to be pregnant again during the festivals of that final year. A further rule (*d*) is that if a man has promised the hair of his child to a deity, and if he waits for several years to make good his promise, then he must at the same time

4: Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

842 offer up the hair of all subsequent children that
782 may have been born to him in the interim.

6.64. Early in the nineteenth century the Abbé
842 J. A. Dubois, understandably aghast at what he
782 had learnt, noted that women yearning for children
786 prostituted themselves to anyone at temple festi-
837 vals in the plains near the foot of the Nilgiri Hills. "Barren women, in the hope that they will cease to be so, visit them after binding themselves by a vow to grant their favours to a fixed number of libertines" (Dubois 1906 : 596). He also wrote
842 about the temple at Nanjangud, near Mysore,
788 which is in the centre of the Badagas' ancient home-
787 land and is still much visited by them:
514

> Offerings and prayers are not the only ceremonies which have to be gone through. On leaving the temple the woman, accompanied by her husband, has to go to a place where all the pilgrims are accustomed to resort to answer the calls of nature. There the husband and the wife collect with their hands a certain quantity of ordure and form it into a small pyramid, which they are careful to mark with a sign that will enable them to recognize it. Then they go to the neighbouring tank and mix in the hollow of their hands the filth which has soiled their fingers. (But I will spare my readers the rest.) After having performed their ablutions they retire. Two or three days afterwards they visit their pyramid, and, still using their hands, turn the filthy mass over and over and examine it as carefully and as seriously as the Roman augurs scrutinized the entrails of sacrificed animals, in order to see if any insects have been engendered in it. In this case it would be a very good omen, showing that the woman would soon be pregnant. But if, after careful search, not even the smallest insect is visible, the poor couple,

4: Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

sad and discouraged, return home in the full conviction that the expenses they have been put to and the pains they have taken have been of no avail. (Dubois 1906 : 594-95)

More recently it has also been reported that sterile women attended the popular festival of the goddess Ma:riamma at Ka:ramaḍai, near the eastern foot of the Nilgiris in Coimbatore District, to have intercourse with religious mendicants there in the hope of getting children. Such unpleasant procedures, resorted to by Badaga, Tamilian and Kanarese pilgrims alike, have long since ceased to occur, but childless couples still make vows at the Ka:ramaḍai festival "Miles" : (1933 267).

6.65. A liquid medicine (details unrecorded) otherwise given to newly delivered mothers (cf. 4.11) is administered to a person who cannot urinate. This condition and the associated swollen bladder, caused by excess of "heat" in the body, are relieved by the medicine.

URETHRITIS (*sege*)

Fevers

6.66. The Badagas like the English have a saying, "If you are suffering from a cold, take extra food; if suffering from a fever, take little food." There are different kinds of fever, and they can affect people of all ages, but one medicine can be taken for all kinds. The shoots and smaller leaves of the velvety patchouli and related species (*koḍaṅgu*) are ground up and the juice from them mixed with some salt. This is swallowed, and is said to be more effective than quinine. In the early nineteenth century opium was used as a prophylactic against fever (Price 1908: 224).

FEVER (*jara*)

6.67. The Kurumbas knew of a now-forgotten twig or root which, when smelled fresh, dispelled fever. The present medicine of the Badagas makes use instead of the nest of the red-headed fantail warbler

4: Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

759 that if this habit became general, the therapists would make themselves equally accessible to all patients.

[844] [431] There is a local tradition that a midwife should be given a new dress by the child's father after a delivery. It is actually given at the child's naming ceremony or else on the last day of the funeral observation should the neonate die. For the last 15 years of her life Sithamma did not deliver babies herself, but was sometimes in attendance and instructed her assistants. People still offered her the dress, but she blessed it and asked them to give it to somebody in need of it.

Midwives

759 554 10.6. Through the centuries there has been one special role, outside of the family, that has always been held by women, and that is the role of midwife. It has been a position that commands respect for the skill that she must have. Not every woman of course is a potential midwife; but the interested younger women receive some training whenever a delivery occurs in their village. A midwife quite often becomes more than a deliverer of babies. Partly because she is asked to minister to the varied health needs of parturient women and the newborn, she is trusted and consulted and may in time become skilled as a curer of other physical disorders as well. Sometimes she supervises birth among the domestic animals.

759 844 [842] Often there is more than one midwife in a village; other women are asked to come to a delivery if they have helped with one before, and of course the girls who are learning midwifery attend. Yet other women will want to come and watch, and barren women may feel that if they attend they might also become pregnant through the magic of contiguity. The small room may therefore be quite crowded and stuffy.

759 844 783 [515] Midwives go to their work without necessarily washing first. A midwife is polluted by each birth—for three days if it is the mother's first delivery, for one day otherwise ; but this does not imperil a midwife's status in the community. If it is a woman's first delivery, the midwife throws her own clothes away, otherwise she just washes them. A high-status Lingayat such as Sithamma removes her *linga* emblem before beginning at the polluting

4: Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

Other Specialists

759 791 462 (554) 10.8. Midwives and exorcists are specialists, of course, but they differ in status. The midwife deals in the pollution of blood, and is always a female; the exorcist deals in the danger that spirits bring, and is invariably a male. It is thus in accordance with Hindu —and Badaga—thinking that the exorcist ranks higher and the midwife lower in esteem than the more general therapist, whether male or female: one handles supernatural power, the other female pollution.

759 Aside from these categories, however, there are other specialists who are known for their ability to handle particular types of malady. In the foregoing chapters we have encountered three instances of such people. One was a woman, the grandmother of my informant M. N. Thesingh. At the time of her death in 1941 she 759 had treated "nearly a thousand cases" of infertility in women, and 757 found only half-a-dozen of these to be really barren women. For the rest, she prepared a medicine out of three or four different plants. 842 What they were was a secret she took with her to the grave, for she thought that if she taught the medicine to anyone else it would not work well for either of them. She even told her grandson, "You must discover the technique for yourself." He took this to mean that he should spy on her, and once did so. She used to get up at about five in the morning, wash, and then go out to the fields or the forest. On reaching the spot where the necessary plants grew, she looked around till she saw what she wanted; then, with the plant in front of her, she stood facing the east, her palms touching each other as she prayed. Then she sat cross-legged on the ground at that spot and removed a silver ring from the middle finger of the right hand. This she placed on the plant that was in front of her, prayed again, then replaced the ring and picked the plant. She explained later that the ring was an offering to God ; but her grandson failed to discover the identity of the plants.

759 881 554 (777) One case that is remembered by him illustrates the assurance with which this woman treated her patients. A 19-year old girl was was brought from a very distant village, her problem being that she had never menstruated (or had she, but was afraid to admit it for fear of being married?). She arrived on Wednesday, but the therapist (like her daughter-in-law Sithamma) refused to begin new treatment unless on a Tuesday, Friday or Sunday, which are auspicious days; so the girl had to wait.

4: Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

827 because the digestion has already produced such a store of blood.
826 There seems to be no conception of layers of fat lying under the skin.

The existence of a skeleton is recognized. Thus the backbone allows us to stand up erect. Outside it there is a large vein, which is necessary for life to continue. Both large and small bones have been given by God, to aid us in working.

[84] Reproduction is conceived of as a somewhat separate subsystem, but it too centres on the belly; and again it is by God's grace that there are two sexes. He has given us hair only in certain parts of the body to differentiate us from animals. Furthermore, he has given moustaches and beards to men and breasts to women, in order to distinguish between the sexes. It is also God's will that only men have semen, and only women have menses. Inside the
826 belly of women, but not of men, there is a bag, the womb (*ku:su*
827 *pae*) where a foetus grows. The foetus is formed entirely from
842 semen, which is why copulation is essential for conception. Blood
843 comes to the child after digestion has occurred in the mother's belly, and the foetus grows with this blood. Without conception this blood becomes waste each mouth. Urine and faeces are simi-
827 larly waste products of the digestion process in the belly.

After birth, milk flows from the belly to the breasts, and is
826 sucked through the nipples (*ma: ru*). These are thought to be the
827 outside part of the *nenju*, and it is by God's grace that only in women do they give milk.

The semen is another product of the belly, and it passes from there to the penis during coitus. The function of the *he:ḍu* (scrotum and testicles) is simply to effect an erection; it is not a source of semen.

Parts of the body present from birth do not grow continuously, but hair, being like grass, does. Nevertheless a child does grow slowly if it is fed properly, just as vegetables do if they are manured. If one's *nenju* pulsates weakly, then that person will become weak. If he does not take food and drink he will die, for all the other functions of the body will stop.

Diagnosis

128 10.14. The preceding few chapters have presented an excursion into the ethnomedicine of the Badagas, as described to me by some

234 778 (793) (231) (372) (262) (562) (783) 793 (262) (431) pasture on neighboring slopes, and processes milk into clarified butter. This, as the sacred clarified butter of the Badagas, is used in lamps within the dairy-temple and for ritual at Badaga festivals or temples. Any Badaga male may visit the Bergani dairy-temple and drink buttermilk given to him by the priest. Because women are polluting, no woman may enter the dairy-temple complex itself. However, women of nearby Bergani hamlet come daily to an established point at an uncontaminating distance from the dairy-temple and there receive buttermilk for household consumption. Buttermilk from processed sacred milk is also drunk by the priest. The priest never eats meat while in office and cooks his own vegetarian food. All grains, vegetables, and other foodstuffs needed by him are supplied by visitors or neighboring Bergani Badagas.

796 (788) (562) (293) (262) (784) (793) (241) (842) The festival honoring Masthi Hethai takes place on a Monday in mid-January. Badaga males from all over the Nilgiris come with their Hethai sticks to worship the goddess (Plate III, B). Women may also attend, but must remain an uncontaminating distance away from sacred places. Men and women wear new white clothing, must not bring anything made with leather, and eat no meat during the festival. At the festival's climax, two entranced priests believed to be possessed by Masthi Hethai predict crop yields in the coming main crop season (karbokam) and inform a few men that their wives will shortly conceive. Daily and festival rituals at Bergani are thus parts of a fertility cult related to the Badaga's economy and future prosperity.

234 361 Badaga hundis. The Badagas have for a long time used seasonal

561 602 two men, Ego and 'N', who find that they are "sons-in-law" to each other, because Ego is FZH to 'N' but is also a classificatory BS to the wife of 'N'. Thus, if the permitted marriage that Diagram 1 illustrates takes place, the two men do not know how to treat each other according to the rules that normally guide behaviour towards affines. The problem is resolved by determining which man is the older one and is thus entitled to the deference of the other.

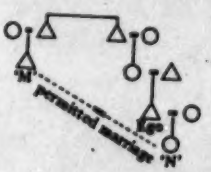

Diagram 2

The same point about the non-recognition of affinal generation levels is brought out in a second example. In Diagram 2 Ego should not show respect to 'M', although the latter is of a superior generation level, because it is permissible for 'M' to marry 'N'. Ego therefore calls 'M', his potential son-in-law, by name instead of by a kin term, as he would otherwise do in addressing an older person. It is important to note that in a society where (587) (795) remarriage is common and polygyny does occur, any married couple can quite probably trace the kin relationship linking them through two or even three different routes. In such a situation, aggravated as it is by the commonness of "cross-generational" marriages, affinal generation levels really become unmanageable concepts, since Ego's spouse could conceivably be assigned to several different generation levels, from his point of view, depending on which way her relationship to him was traced through their kinship field.

593 586 (613) Rights over the wife as genetrix rest fully with her husband and his lineage. Upon divorcing her he assumes control and responsibility for all of the children she has produced for him, boys and girls, and she is sent back to her father's house (cf. Table 5).

843 (611) (842) The fundamental principle of patriliny finds biological justification in the Badaga theory of conception. In their traditional view, a foetus develops solely from the semen of the father. The only biological role of the mother is a nurturing one, seen as rather analogous to manuring a field. Blood comes to the foetus from the mother's stomach, where it has been made from digested food; and after the delivery her milk also comes from digested food in the stomach. While the mother's role is thus a crucial one in that she feeds the foetus and baby, it is not considered to develop from her flesh at all.